

ELIZA PINKSTON.

In this connection we can not do better than to give part of Mr. Key's speech in the senate on December 19th.

"Eliza Pinkston has fearfully wrought up the feelings, the sympathies, the indignation of the Senator from Ohio, [Mr. Sherman.] Her story does not make the impression on my mind it did on his, because do not believe it; he does. The murder of the husband, the massacre of the helpless innocent babe, the character of the injuries to the woman are not the work of the white race or any other civilized race. They never occurred as detailed. I know nothing of the facts except as I have seen them in the papers, but I undertake to say that no white man was concerned in the outrages detailed by Eliza Pinkston. My friend from Ohio will learn that as a general proposition negro testimony is not of the highest character of credibility. It is no matter of surprise that this is so. The ancestors of this people were savages when brought to our shores: Their descendants were born in slavery. The school-house was shut against them. The law was violated in teaching them to read and write. Slavery and ignorance demoralized the slave. Their associations were with their own race, and even the free colored man was not permitted to mingle with the slaves. Under such circumstances it was impossible that they should be the subjects of many refining influences, or that their moral perceptions should be clear and distinct. They were not to blame for all this; but the result was, as everyone knows who understands the subject at all, that with most of them truth was not appreciated, chastity was held in little repute, and the obligations of an oath were not understood, for they were scarcely ever in courts or examined as witnesses. There are many glorious exceptions to this statement; and since the emancipation of the colored race the evidence of a marked, I think may say an astonishing, improvement in all these respects is most encouraging. But history and experience teach us that when a race or people have been demoralized by any cause, there are many of them who never can be recovered or elevated.

I beg to assure my friend from Ohio [Mr. Sherman] that there are not so large a number of banditti and savages among the white people of the South as he has been led to suppose by the testimony he heard before the Louisiana returning board. About the 1st of May, 1866, what was called the Memphis riot occurred. During the first session of the Thirty-ninth Congress the House of Representatives appointed a select committee, with our present distinguished minister to the government of France at its head. This committee heard testimony detailing brutalities, outrages, and ferocities equal, or nearly so, to those detailed by Eliza Pinkston. Among the witnesses examined by that committee were Frances Thompson and Lucy Smith. By referring to the report of that committee (House Representatives Report No. 101, first session Thirty-ninth Congress) the testimony of Frances and Lucy may be found. According to Frances' story, she and Lucy lived together; seven Irishmen came to their house, insulted her and Lucy, beat and choked and robbed them, and four of the Irishmen outraged Frances' person, and three of them Lucy's. Lucy attempts the corroboration of Frances' testimony: says she and Frances lived together; that she was seventeen years old; that but one Irishman violated her person. The next one said she was so near dead that he would have nothing to do with her, so he struck her a blow and left her. The impression this testimony made on the minds of that committee was as strong and vivid as that made by that of Eliza Pinkston on the judgment and feelings of the Senator from Ohio [Mr. Sherman.] On pages 13 and 14 of Mr. Washburne's report will be found what he says on the subject. He tells us that

"The colored girl, Lucy Smith, who was before the committee, said to be sixteen or seventeen years old, but who seemed from her appearance to be two or three years younger, was a girl of modest demeanor and highly respectable in appearance.

He speaks of Frances thus:
"She had been a slave, was a cripple using crutches, having a cancer on her foot.

So atrocious was the story of these wrongs that the blood of Mr. Washburne boiled over at the horror of its details, as did that of the Senator from Ohio [Mr. Sherman] over Eliza Pinkston's and he tells with a burst of righteous indignation, that

"It is a singular fact that while this mob was breathing vengeance against the negroes, and shooting them down like dogs, yet when they found unprotected colored women they at once 'conquered their prejudices,' and proceeded to violate them under circumstances of the most licentious brutality."

That committee believed, honestly believed, all this was done. Frances Thompson some years after was arrested for violation of the law, and upon examination of the case it was discovered that Frances was a man, a fact no doubt known all the while to Frances' bedfellow, the young, modest, and "highly respectable" Lucy Smith. The testimony of these witnesses was utterly and necessarily untrue, and so is that of Eliza Pinkston, as is most apparent from its face. She says that she had her baby in her arms; that some of the men laid its little head upon her arm and cut its throat, and then they went to cutting her; they shot her twice, once in the throat and once in the leg. This was all done in the house. Then they got her out of doors, and cut her jaw into the jaw-bone, and cut her throat. They then got the axe which she chopped wood with, and struck her a blow on the head with it with such violence that it broke the iron axe just at the eye. They cut her head strings off. The Senator from Ohio [Mr. Sherman] says they hamstringed her and violated her person. Here was this woman, shot in the breast and leg, with her throat and jaw and head strings cut, stricken on the head with an axe with such force that the axe was broken, hamstringed, and violated, who was able to get over into the cotton-field, and thence to Mr. Tidwell's house, and then to Epsy Williams, and then to Miraud Gates's, where she staid a few days. How far these places were apart she does not tell us. A salamander is nothing to Eliza. She tells us that they left Henry Pinkston unburied, and her for dead, and yet they took the body of the dead child a quarter of a mile away and threw it into a lake. And on this testimony, the falsehood of which is so apparent on its face, a State is to be disfranchised and a President whom the people never elected is to be placed in office. My friend from Ohio lets his heart run away with his head in giving credence to Eliza's story. The brutal treatment of the husband, the murder of the child, and the injuries to Eliza were not the deeds of white men or any other race. I do not believe they occurred as detailed. And, sir, these darkest deeds are done, we are told, in a State which is under republican control, and no warrants issued, offenders arrested, and no efforts made to punish the guilty monsters.

Before southern States and people are held guilty of such gross outrages there ought to be a sufficient amount of kinship between the sections not to allow each other to be convicted of the most fiendish crimes on such false and unreasonable testimony. It would be better to hold that all presumptions of crime are against the southern people and that they are conclusive. O, sir, it is time that we become infused with more of that charity which "thinketh no evil and is kind;" it is time that we should have that confidence which would allow us to repose trust in each other. It is time for us to make our government one of law instead of force. It is time that offenders should be tried and punished and not those who are innocent. The wicked should be condemned and not communities or states because wicked men are in them. If a people lose confidence in the good faith and justice of their government or the government lose confidence in its people, there will in such a country soon be an end of liberty and free institutions. Before the people of my own State in the canvass lately ended I on all occasions endorsed the candidates of the republican party for President and Vice-President as patriotic and honest men, of whom any party or country might be justly proud. I supported Mr. Tilden and Mr. Hendricks because I thought them in every way worthy for the high offices to which they aspired. My opinion of none of them has changed. None of them desire the offices for which they were supported against the will of the people as expressed under the methods provided by law. We must be actuated by the same spirit. We must settle this question in some fair, just, honorable mode at once peaceful and conciliatory. The peace, the harmony, the liberty of the people are of far greater importance than the question as to who shall be the occupant of the presidential chair. Success should be sought only on the merits of the case. Neither party should seek the advantage under technical theories or by force of physical power, but the right should be reached by honest, non-partisan, and peaceful methods and the country, the whole country be uppermost in all minds and hearts.